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(Provisional Agenda item 4(e))

THE REPORT OF THE WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(Commission decision H (45))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. The present Report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 8 of decision H (45) in which the Commission, inter alia:

" 1. Agrees to intensify further its efforts towards promoting and achieving sustainable development by integrating environmental concerns and considerations into projects and programmes in all areas;

2. Reiterates its call upon its subsidiary bodies actively to promote sustainable development as a guiding principle for all relevant activities of the ECE;

...

4. ... invites the Executive Secretary to submit the relevant agreed results of the [regional conference at ministerial level, held in Bergen (Norway), from 8-16 May 1990, to review progress in the follow-up of selected aspects of the Report of the World Commission] to the appropriate Principal Subsidiary Bodies with a view to consideration of the inclusion of possible new sectoral and cross-sectoral activities in the work programmes of the ECE;

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5. Endorses the continuation of the intersectoral co-operation between the Senior Economic Advisers and the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems in the form of a Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics [...] to consider relevant parts of the outcome of the Bergen Conference [...]; and invites the other Principal Subsidiary Bodies to co-operate with the Joint Working Group; ...".

2. The present Report is divided into two parts. Part I refers to the more important activities of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission which are relevant to the implementation of the provisions contained in the Ministerial Declaration (MD) and the Joint Agenda for Action (JAA) of the Bergen Conference. Part II contains information on the Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics which was established pursuant to paragraph 5 of decision H (45).

Part I

Relevant activities of the Subsidiary Bodies of the Commission

3. In accordance with paragraph 4 of decision H (45), the Executive Secretary made available to the appropriate Principal Subsidiary Bodies copies of the Ministerial Declaration and the Joint Agenda for Action. Information concerning the principal activities of, and action taken by, the subsidiary bodies of the Commission which are relevant to the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration and Agenda are provided below.

(a) The Economics of Sustainability

Natural resource accounting (MD, paragraph 13 (b))

4. The agenda for the next session of the Conference of European Statisticians, to be held from 17 to 21 June 1991, will include an item dealing with environmental accounting. Documentation to be considered under this item will include a proposal to launch a project aimed at the development of an "Internationally Agreed System for Resource Accounting".

Economic instruments (MD, paragraph 13 (c))

5. Under the auspices of the Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics, work is being undertaken on economic instruments in co-operation with OECD. (See below Part II)

Increase the flow of capital and environmentally-sound technology to ... east European countries (M.D. paragraph 13 (c))

6. The Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems are reviewing initiatives and projects in the field of bilateral and multilateral financial co-operation in the ECE region of relevance to environmental protection.

The role of international trade in promoting sustainable development (MD, paragraph 13 (h))

7. A Seminar on International Standards for Environmental Protection was held in May 1990, at which participants stressed the need to harmonize methods for evaluating environmental quality. The issue will be considered by the Working Party on Standardization Policies when it reviews the ECE Standardization List.

(b) Sustainable Energy Use

Energy efficiency 2000 (MD, paragraph 14 (a))

8. At their seventh session in October 1990 the Senior Advisers on Energy provided guidance on the broad outlines of the project "Energy Efficiency 2000". This project aims at closing the gap between the energy-intensive industries and countries of central and eastern Europe and the more efficient energy usage in the countries of western Europe and North America. The Senior Advisers:

" (a) approved the implementation of the "Energy efficiency 2000" project under their auspices;

(b) requested the secretariat to prepare a detailed project description to be circulated as soon as possible;

(c) decided to convene an ad hoc Meeting on "Energy Efficiency 2000" to be held from 29 to 31 January 1991 to agree on the modalities of the Project." (ECE/ENERGY/15, para. 17)

9. The secretariat prepared and issued a detailed description of the Energy Efficiency 2000 project (ENERGY/AC.11/R.1) which was considered at the ad hoc Meeting in January 1991.

10. The ad hoc meeting reviewed the modalities of the project, in particular the expected outputs, organization and calendar, and listed the contributions which had been announced by various countries in cash, kind and staff. The first session of the Steering Committee for the project will be held from 28 to 30 May 1991, at which time the project will become operational.

Energy labelling (MD, paragraph 14 (g))

11. The Senior Advisers on Energy agreed to include an element in their programme of work on Energy efficiency standards (project 01(b). 5.3). Its aim is to create a more transparent market for energy-saving goods, to avoid technical barriers to trade and to establish a system of labelling and classification of energy-using products which should be compatible from country to country. The project is intended to lay the foundation for providing guidance to consumers, and a comparable basis for the use of economic instruments and for assessing energy efficiency. It will be initiated at an ad hoc meeting which will draw up a short list of the categories of products where information on energy efficiency will contribute most to reducing energy consumption by vehicles and appliances and in buildings.

Harmful effects of the transport sector (MD, paragraph 14 (i))

12. The activities of the Inland Transport Committee aimed at reducing the harmful effects of the transport sector centre primarily on the activities of the Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles, in particular the continuous updating and supplementing of a number of Regulations under the Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions of Approval and Reciprocal Recognition of Approval for Motor Vehicle Equipment and Parts which has been signed by 21 Governments. The regulations cover, inter alia, emission of gaseous pollutants (R.49 and 83), noise (R.9), maximum speed (R.68), speed reduction devices (under preparation), liquid petroleum gases (LPG) (R.67) and fuel consumption (R.84).

13. The technical annexes to the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR) and the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) contain provisions aimed at reducing the negative impact on the environment of road and railway infrastructure, respectively.

(c) Sustainable Industrial Activity

Environmentally sound production (MD, paragraph 15 (b))

14. The Working Party on Low-and Non waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes is promoting an appropriate information flow on environmentally-related specifications of products from manufacturers to competent authorities, users, consumers and those responsible for recovery, recycling, re-utilization and discard of wates. A task force with the Netherlands as lead country is preparing compatible criteria and principles for such an information flow in the form of environmental product profiles for consideration by the Working Party in 1991.

Waste minizimation (MD, paragraph 15 (b))

15. As a follow-up to the ECE Declaration on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes, a regional strategy for integrated waste management is being elaborated under the auspices of the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems. This stategy is aimed at promoting and establishing a systematic approach - the "cradle-to-grave" approach - to harmonize policies on waste management at a national and international level and thus helping to resolve environmental problems associated with the generation of wastes in production and consumption processes and with the handling, transport and disposal of wastes in the ECE region.

Safe and appropriate use and disposal of hazardous substances (MD, paragraph 15 (c))

16. A Convention on Civil Liability for Damages Caused During Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels to Life, Property and Environment has been open for signature since 1 February 1990. It is based on the principles of strict and limited liability, the channelling of responsibility and compulsory insurance.

17. The Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods regularly updates and supplements sets of regulations on the transport of dangerous goods including wastes.

18. The Working Party on Low and Non-waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes is examining policies for waste production, replacement, recovery, recycling and re-utilization with a view to comparing experiences in their implementation including the economic, technological, environmental and social elements affecting this promotion. Recommendations to ECE Governments to this effect are being elaborated.

Stimulate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, particularly to east European and developing countries
(MD, paragraph 15 (e))

19. In accordance with the suggestion made in paragraph 8 (h) of the Joint Agenda for Action, the Chemical Industry Committee agreed to incorporate in its programme of work a project related to the convening of a high-level meeting on sustainable development in the chemical and related industries (ECE/CHEM/77, para. 36 and annex 1, project 03.1.2). The first preparatory meeting took place on 23 January 1991 at which it was decided, inter alia, to modify the title to "High-Level Meeting on Co-operation and Sustainable Development in the Chemical Industry"; and that it would deal with three topics, namely:

- The availability and rational use of raw materials and energy;
- Environmental issues related to the production and use of chemicals; and
- National policies, legislation and conditions for co-operation in the chemical industry in the ECE region.

20. A second preparatory meeting will be held on 28 May 1991 at which a decision will be taken on the location and date of the High-Level Meeting.

21. Also in accordance with the suggestion made in paragraph 8 (h) of the Joint Agenda for Action, the secretariat is co-operating closely with the International Iron and Steel Institute on organizing the World Conference on Environmental Control in the Steel Industry, to be held in Dusseldorf (Germany) from 15 to 17 April 1991.

22. Pursuant to Commission decision D (45) (see also E/ECE/1232) the secretariat has provided assistance in organizing workshops dealing with problems affecting economies in transition. Among those which have or will deal with issues related to sustainable development, mention may be made of the workshop on the USSR Steel Industry in Transition Towards Market Conditions, to be held in Moscow in March 1991, and the preparations which are underway for a similar workshop, to be held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in June 1991.

Strengthen sustainability in every sector of production including forestry, agriculture and fisheries (MD, paragraph 15 (j))

23. The principles of sustainable development are the basis for many of the activities of the Committee on Agricultural Problems and the Timber Committee, notably those concerned with the maintenance of the productivity of agricultural and forest soils from both the economic and ecological points of view. A Symposium on Methods and Concepts for the Use of Organic and Chemical Fertilizers was held as well as a Seminar on Forest Site Conservation and Improvement of Sustainable Yield. Other relevant activities include assessments of long-term development of the forest and forest industries sector through the Timber Committee's contribution to the part of the 1990 Global Forest Resource Assessment which deals with the temperate-zone, and the preparations for the fifth in the series of studies of European Timber Trends and Prospects. Similar studies have recently been published on the USSR and North America. The Working Party on Water Problems is promoting the prevention and control of water pollution from fertilizers and pesticides and is developing recommendations aimed at substitution and/or considerable reduction of the use of substances hazardous to water, bearing in mind the need to maintain viable agricultural practices. Recommendations to ECE Governments are being elaborated to this effect.

(d) The Follow-up Process

Strengthened co-operation in relation to regional environmental policies (MD, paragraph 20)

24. The Committee on Housing, Building and Planning in September 1990 launched a project on sustainable development of human settlements. The aim is to prepare a strategy for environmentally sound and sustainable development of human settlements in the ECE region. The Committee will hold an in-depth discussion on the draft of the strategy at its 1991 session.

ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (MD, paragraph 23)

25. The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context was finalized in September 1990 for adoption and signature at the Ministerial level during the fourth session of the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems, to be held in Espoo (Finland) from 25 February to 1 March 1991. The Convention stipulates commonly agreed provisions to carry out jointly or to co-ordinate national procedures for assessing environmental impacts and to arrange for the application of environmental impact assessment at an early stage of planning for certain activities likely to cause significant adverse transboundary impacts. It provides the possibility for a potentially affected party to be informed about, and provide an input to, the decision-making process for such activities. The Convention also includes procedures by which the public, in the areas likely to be affected, on both sides of the border, have the possibility to comment on proposed activities.

Part II

Activities of the Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics

26. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of decision H (45), the first session of the Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics was held on 18 and 19 January 1991. The Joint Working Group agreed on a programme of work (ENVWA/WG.2/2; EC.AD/WG.1/2) including the following four projects:

- As a first step in an evaluation of the current situation, problems and obstacles encountered by countries in transition in the field of the environment and economics, the Academy of National Economy of the USSR, with the assistance of the secretariat, will prepare a situation report of the Soviet Union for consideration by the Joint Working Group at its second session (project 05.1.1.1; 11.3.4.1);

- Study of the use of new approaches to the costing and funding of environmental policies in the context of competing priorities, with special reference to the needs of countries in transition. A workshop will be organized by the Government of Hungary, under the auspices of the Joint Working Group and in co-operation with the OECD, and a report on its outcome will be considered by the Joint Working Group at its second session (project 05.1.1.2; 11.3.4.2);

- Study on the macro-economic implications of policies at the national and international levels. A workshop will be organized by the Government of Norway, under the auspices of the Joint Working Group, and a report will be prepared on its outcome for consideration by the Joint Working Group at its second session (project 05.1.1.3; 11.3.4.3); and

- Consideration of issues raised in the guidelines which have been established by the OECD for its member countries on the use of economic instruments, with a view to considering their possible application to the region as a whole. An ad hoc meeting, in co-operation with OECD, will be convened in December 1991, (project 05.1.1.4; 11.3.4.4).